

PRINCIPAL GATEWAY TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.



ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S Hospital is one of the most ancient, as well as the most important, of the numerous charities which distinguish England from all other countries in the world. Rahere, by whom it was founded, lived in the reign of Henry I. A curious document among the Cottonian MSS. (quoted at length by Malen in his *Londinium Redivivum*) describes the life of Rahere, and the circumstances which led him to build the priory of St. Bartholomew and the hospital near it. In his youth he is described as haunting "the hows-holdys of noblemen and the palices of prynces; where under every elbowe of them, he spread ther coshyngs with iapys and flatteryngs delectably annoynting the eeryes, by this mean to drawe to hym ther frendschippis," and took the lead at all plays "and other courtly mook'ys."

Becoming impressed with a feeling of the wickedness of his life, he journeyed to Rome as a penance. Here he was overtaken by sickness, and being at the point of death, made a vow, that if he recovered, he would build

"an hospitale in recreation of poure men, and to them so ther gadered necessities mynyster after his power." He was afterwards commanded by St. Bartholomew, in a dream, according to the legend, to build a church in his name in Smithfield; and recovering, returned to England to fulfil his vow, and comply with the command. Having obtained the king's favour, he first built the church, and then "an hospitale house a litell lenger off from the church by hymself he began to edifie."

The hospital remained attached to the priory till after the dissolution; when Henry VIII., in the last year of his reign, granted it a new charter of incorporation, and endowed it with a certain sum on condition that the citizens of London should contribute an equal amount. At the present time its revenue is very large, the good it effects incalculable.

The buildings escaped the Fire of London; but becoming ruinous, were for the most part taken down in 1729. Subscriptions were

raised to rebuild it, and in 1730, the present structure was commenced from the design of James Gibbs, but was not completed before 1770.

The principal gateway, very accurately represented by the accompanying engraving, is of earlier date than the hospital, having been rebuilt in 1502, when Sir W. Pritchard, Kt., was president, and John Nicoll, Esq., treasurer. The whole is of stone, and is in a good state of repair,—much better than the hospital itself. The figure in the niche is intended for Henry VIII., those on the broken pediment above it, are designed to represent Lucrece and Disease. Originally this gateway was connected with buildings on either side, and did not profess to have any thing more than a street front. Lately its character has been altered by removing these buildings, and the result is not advantageous to the design.

In the ensuing number we shall give views of the quadrangle and the Giltspur-street gateway, and shall then be able to speak more at length of the architectural peculiarities of the hospital.

* Rahere's tomb is in the church of St. Bartholomew the Great close by; an interesting building, once part of the old priory.